

## GOD WORKS ADVERSITY FOR GOOD - Part 4 - Acts 23:1-5 – November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

- This is a really good time to answer the question of why we've taken so long going through Acts chapter by chapter and verse by verse.
- One of the reasons I bring this up now, is because on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, we will have, since 2006, been in the book of Acts for three years.
- I've heard it said, as it relates to the Book of Acts; "if a pastor really loves his church, he will teach the Book of Acts to his church."

- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones called the book of Acts; "that most lyrical of books . . . Live in that book, I exhort you: It is a tonic, the greatest tonic I know of in the realm of the Spirit."

- Another reason I bring this up at this time is because of this chapter we have before us. It confirms to me; "we're not going too slowly."
- Please allow me to explain it this way; "where ever we are at in our study of God's Word, is where we are at in our lives in this world.
- In other words, the timing of our arrival in this and even the previous chapter could not have been more perfect for where we are at.
- The reason for this is because God's Word is both living and active in that when we read and study it, it in turn reads and studies us.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. NIV

- The Word of God comes alive and actively studies the thoughts and attitudes of my heart as it relates to how the goodness of God.

- One commentator said it this way; "I always thought the Word was quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword because it would bring to light and deal with my failures. Not true. Look at the context of the verse. The Word pierces the heart as it recounts stories of people who were robbed because they just didn't believe how good God is. It's all about Him."

- It is for this reason that we are in part four of a teaching that began back in chapter 22 titled; "God Works Adversity for Good."
- We've looked at four ways God may choose to use adversity for our betterment and His glory, and will now begin with the fifth one.

### **5. In having a clear conscience (23:1)**

**23:1** Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."

- v1 Paul begins by addressing them as his brothers, and tells them he's fulfilled his duty to God in that he has a clear conscience.
- In other words, he was saying that he had been blameless because there was nothing that he regretted or was ashamed of.

"Paul might well appeal to the testimony of conscience as he stood before the supreme court of Israel; it was on no righteousness of his own, however, that he relied for justification in the heavenly court. The purest conscience was an insecure basis of confidence under the scrutiny of God."  
F.F. Bruce

- Maybe a better way to both illustrate it and understand it would be as it relates to that old saying; "let your conscience be your guide."
- Paul is saying that his conscience is not his guide, God is his guide, and because of that, his conscience is clear before God.
- We would do well to carefully and prayerfully consider our conscience before God, as He may be showing us where we're to blame.
- Let me take it a step further, God may have allowed the adversity to strike in order to get our attention so He can show us our blame.

"**blameless**" (Greek: unrebukeable). There should be nothing in his conduct on which someone could ground a charge or accusation—having unquestionable integrity, being irreproachable, not able to find fault with, or deserving of censure. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6)

### **6. By admitting our fault (Verses 2-5)**

2 At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" 4 Those who were standing near Paul said, "You dare to insult God's high priest?" 5 Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"

- v2-3 The high priest Ananias orders Paul be hit in the mouth. Paul angrily calls them whitewashed walls because of their hypocrisy.
- v4 Those standing close to Paul rebuke him for insulting the high priest, which was clearly wrong according to Exodus 22:28.
- v5 Paul does what most won't and admits his fault when he tells them that he didn't realize he Ananias was the high priest.

Oswald Chambers - "It's not a question of if I have been wronged, it's have I wronged?"